



# Press Release



**Congressman John Conyers, Jr.  
Michigan, 14<sup>th</sup> District**

**Ranking Member, U.S. House Judiciary Committee  
Dean, Congressional Black Caucus**

[www.house.gov/judiciary\\_democrats/index.html](http://www.house.gov/judiciary_democrats/index.html)

For Immediate Release:  
March 11, 2005

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**Rep. Conyers Leads Call on FEC For Campaign Finance  
Exemption For Web Logs**  
Says Bloggers Critical To Democratization of Media

Representative John Conyers, Jr., Ranking Member on the House Judiciary Committee, sent the following letter, joined by fourteen additional co-signers, to the FEC calling on the Commission to remove any ambiguity in upcoming rulemaking and make explicit that a blog would not be subject to disclosure requirements, campaign finance limitations or other regulations simply because it contains political commentary. The letter follows below:

March 11, 2005

The Honorable Scott E. Thomas, Chairman  
The Honorable Michael E. Toner, Vice Chairman  
The Honorable David M. Mason, Commissioner  
The Honorable Bradley A. Smith, Commissioner  
The Honorable Danny L. McDonald, Commissioner  
The Honorable Ellen L. Weintraub, Commissioner  
Federal Election Commission  
999 E Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20463

Dear Mr. Chairman and Commissioners:

We write to express our concern over the possible implications of U.S. District Court Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly's decision in *Christopher Shays & Martin Meehan v. Federal Election Commission*, 337 F.Supp.2d 28 (D.D.C. 2004), to overturn the Federal Election Commission's (FEC) blanket exemption of the Internet from the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 (BCRA). Specifically, we are concerned about the impact this decision could have on internet weblogs ("blogs").

We have been advised the FEC will soon open a rulemaking in this area. Many of us were strong supporters of campaign finance reform generally, and of the BCRA. While the impact of the *Shays* decision on blogs remains subject to debate, we urge you to remove any ambiguity and make explicit in this rule that a blog would not be subject to disclosure requirements, campaign finance limitations or other regulations simply because it contains political commentary or includes links to a candidate or political party's website, provided that the candidate or political party did not compensate the blog for such linking. We believe such an interpretation is entirely consistent with the BCRA, which has helped to mitigate the impact of soft money on politics. We also believe such an interpretation would easily pass judicial muster as well.

Throughout our nation's history, Americans have turned to the press for information and analysis in order to make a more informed decision concerning politics. The past decade has witnessed exponential growth of the Internet, as well as in the number of Americans accessing the World Wide Web. Along with this growth has been the emergence of Web reporters who play a critical role in commentating on American political affairs and who seek to inform the debate in an environment that is generally accessible by all.

In our view, this "democratization" of the media is a welcome development in this era of media consolidation and a corresponding lack of diversity of views in traditional media outlets. Given the emergence of this new method of reporting and Americans' increasing reliance on it for their political information, it is critical that BCRA's press exemption should be clarified to apply to those who are reporting on the Internet.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Rep. John Conyers, Jr.  
Rep. Bernie Sanders  
Rep. Luis Gutierrez  
Rep. Jim McDermott  
Rep. Maxine Waters  
Rep. James McGovern  
Rep. Adam Smith

Rep. Rick Boucher  
Rep. Zoe Lofgren  
Rep. Chaka Fattah  
Rep. Lynn Woolsey  
Rep. Raul Grijalva  
Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee  
Rep. Ron Paul